



Stephen Salisbury

## ACTION OF THE COUNCIL.

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SPECIAL MEETING, AUG. 28, 1884.

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AT a special meeting of the Council, convened at the Society's hall, August 28, 1884, to consider the loss of their President, the Hon. STEPHEN SALISBURY, LL.D.:

Hon. GEORGE F. HOAR, LL.D., the First Vice-President, occupied the chair, and stated the object of the meeting.

In conformity to a custom inaugurated by Mr. SALISBURY, and followed by the Council for many years, he had prepared a series of resolutions, which he submitted, as follows:

*Resolved*, That the Council, learning the death of the Honorable STEPHEN SALISBURY at the ripe age of eighty-six, desires to record its profound sense of gratitude to God for the great gift to this Society of its beloved benefactor, associate and President. For forty-four years he has been a member of this Society; for forty-one years he has been a member of the Council; for thirty years he has been President. Except the founder, he has been our principal benefactor. He was most valuable in the work to which this institution is dedicated, a laborious, careful and trustworthy historical investigator, and an admirable presiding officer. To his wise counsel and direction much of whatever success this Society has attained has been due. His presence and his generous hospitality have given to our

meetings, so long as the oldest of us can remember them, their principal attraction and charm.

*Resolved,* That our deceased President was a shining example of very great moral and intellectual qualities. The first citizen of the community where he dwelt, master of great wealth, object of universal respect and honor, he bore himself with such modesty and humility that it never occurred to the humblest man who knew him that they met otherwise than as equals. Exempt from the necessity of labor on his own account, he was as conspicuous for industry and frugality as for generosity. He was a man of stainless integrity and honor, and of rare courtesy. A most munificent benefactor of almost every enterprise of education or charity in this community, he so limited his gifts as to stimulate other men to do their share. He was satisfied with accomplishing good ends, and never seemed to desire credit or applause for what he had done for them. He never demanded for his opinion in the administration of enterprises whose success was due to his generosity even the weight which would be its due independently of his share in the endowment. He bore his full part of the personal labor of all public undertakings with as much fidelity and public spirit as if he had nothing but his labor to bestow. The oldest man who survives him can scarcely remember a time when he was not loved and honored by the whole community. His physical frame yielded to the weight of four-score and six years. But his mental powers never felt the effect of age. His intellect maintained to the last a growth like that of youth.

*Resolved,* That a committee of three be appointed to provide for the delivery before the Society of an address commemorative of our deceased President.

*Resolved,* That these resolutions and the proceedings of this meeting be communicated to the Society and to the son of Mr. SALISBURY.



Rev. GEORGE E. ELLIS, D.D., said :

Familiar as those of us are, whose years are many, with the sentiment and language of commemorative tributes, paid to our vanishing associates, one by one, as they pass from these pleasant fields of study and discussion, we are made to feel on this occasion that the special qualities of our late highly honored President restrict us in our utterance. We do not find it difficult to define to ourselves the elements and proportions of his singularly attractive character, or its tone and mode of manifestation. But its very delicacy, simplicity and reserve would check us in any eulogistic phrase or over-strength of expression. His calm and gentle dignity, his equipoise of temperament, set forth his winning courtesy of manners. With varied and comprehensive attainments, acquired through his long years of faithful and enlarged culture, the result in him was solidity, rather than brilliancy as a scholar and a man of letters.

He was of the best stock and type of New England lineage and development, based on the rugged virtues of a rural ancestry, softened, refined and enriched by academic and professional training, by easy circumstances, by an in-born gentility, and by fine tastes indulged in some of the graver departments of historical, archæological and scientific studies. We, who were his privileged associates in the anniversaries of this Society, in the engaging discussions in this hall, the monument of his munificent generosity, and in the graceful hospitality of his home, deal with him now in the freshness of our bereavement, only as the head and crown of our fellowship. It will be for another occasion, many of them indeed, and for larger, more public, and far more comprehensive companies of his friends, his fellow-citizens, his beneficiaries, to open, but not exhaust, the rich and full career of this useful, blameless, and highly honored man.

JOSEPH SARGENT, M.D., said :

I do not design here to eulogize the excellent and admirable friend we have just lost, after so many years of pleasant association. We all knew his kindness, his uprightness, his broad culture, his sound judgment, his force of character and his good works.

But, having been Mr. SALISBURY'S physician for more than forty years, my intimacy with him was special and peculiar. He was a man of great vigor of constitution, bodily and mentally. And it is remarkable that the mind continued even to grow after the body, very late, began to show symptoms of decay. He had but little sickness in his life and very little disease. And he had none of that superstition which is so common that it seems almost natural, that because one is sick he must necessarily take medicine. He was ready to take advice, and if assured that the processes of restoration, which nature always institutes, could be assisted, he accepted the means. But when the time of his departure came near he wished neither to endeavor to avert nor to postpone the necessary result. His work, he said, was done; and we all know that it was well done. There was not only a readiness to accept the inevitable, but an unwillingness to resist nature's work. He died with no malady, all his functions being usually well performed. There was no struggle, and therefore no victim, but only a cheerful surrender. There was no agony of death, but only the triumphant release of the spirit.

HON. JOHN D. WASHBURN seconded the resolutions, and spoke as follows :

It would be impossible, in the few words which the proprieties of this occasion permit, to add to what is so admirably said in the resolutions before us, to do justice to



the character of Mr. SALISBURY, or to set forth the qualities of his mind and heart with anything like completeness. And yet, Mr. President, in seconding the resolutions, I may be permitted to speak briefly of four great uses, which by his life and acts he was always illustrating; a bright example to all whose opportunities in any of them resemble or even distantly approach his own: the uses of wealth, of education, of high personal and social standing, and of time.

The great hereditary wealth of which in early life he became the possessor, with its additions inevitably great as the development of our city proceeded, was held by him as a sacred trust, to be administered in wisdom and with judicious and discriminating generosity, to be accounted for in severity to his own conscience, and in strictness to the great Judge of all. Not wasted in the light and gay frivolities of life, not trifled away in any even of the innocent ostentations of fashion, not devoted to the graceful elegancies of luxurious ease, nor yet on the other hand wrapped in the sordid and penurious napkin, it was administered by him in personal plainness and frugality, for the good of mankind. He gave upon the conscience and honor of a gentleman, after faithful inquiry into the merits of every cause. Great public institutions built their permanent structures on the foundations which his large beneficence had laid, and obscure and shrinking poverty blessed his name because his ear was never deaf to its appeal. And, modest as generous, presuming nothing over the many because in the gifts of fortune he was exceptional even among the few; he walked in the light of the precept of that ancient philosopher whom he venerated, “non extulisse se in potestate, non fuisse insolentem in pecuniâ, non se praetulisse aliis propter abundantiam fortunæ.”

He illustrated before us the true uses of education: that academic, university, professional training attains its highest ends in making men useful, and competent in a fuller

degree to the discharge of the great practical duties of life. The mere elegance of letters did not suffice for him. He had little patience with the spirit of dilettanteism. Familiar with the ancient classics and the best writers of our own language in earlier and later days, cherishing with peculiar regard the style and modes of expression of the Addisonian period of English literature, he used this familiarity, not as an amusement or a grace alone, but as the strengthener and sustainer of mental activity and force for actual duty. So that, because educated, and while enjoying in the fullest the society and intimacy of scholars, he might mingle more effectively with practical men, and bring to practical life and the discharge of all his large trusts, riper and steadier powers, a complete, well-ordered and self-poised mind.

He made the highest and most influential use of his recognized position as the head of the intellectual and refined society of our community, by showing in his daily walk and conversation that there is no such thing among us as class distinctions. He slighted no man because he was obscure or poor, asking only as the test and touchstone of his regard the clean hands and pure heart which mark the upright man. And, living "the truth which reconciled the strong man reason, faith the child," he gave to all men an illustration, the more effective because of his conspicuous position, of the beauty of modest sincerity and Christian purity of life.

To his latest day, and even as he came into the outer shadow of the portals of eternity, he made the most constant and diligent use of time. During the thirty years through which it has been my privilege to enjoy his uninterrupted friendship, I do not know that I have ever seen him idle for a moment. How bright and instructive the example to all who follow him! The one of all our citizens farthest removed from the necessity of application, rivalling, perhaps surpassing, all his acquaintances, in an industry as







It was my good fortune to be associated with Mr. SALISBURY in various public and private positions, and I can testify to his most remarkable faithfulness to *all* the duties which such positions called for. No man that I have ever known was more conscientious in his attention to even the smallest details of any service laid upon him by his friends or fellow-citizens; and it seems to have been his rule to accept no official position if he did not see that he could give to it all the time and thought that the strictest line of duty could demand. He was especially sensitive to any remissness of others in this regard, and could not understand how so many men accepted offices of duty and trust and yet neglected to give to them the time and attention which in his good judgment they demanded.

Of his generous response to demands so often made upon him for assistance in charitable and educational objects, we are well aware; but how many times he has responded favorably to such calls, upon the express understanding that no public mention should be made of it, we shall never know.

As illustrating his modesty and his generous disposition towards all persons and associations working for the advancement and good of our city, an incident of several years ago comes to mind. When an association in which I was especially interested, became in urgent need of pecuniary aid, I received from Mr. SALISBURY a letter containing a check for an amount ample to meet its pressing wants, but with the express condition that no mention should be made of the name of the donor. I had made no request for assistance in behalf of the association, and although he was in a position to know something of its needs, I had no reason, before the receipt of his letter, to suppose he had given a thought to the matter.

His thoughtful and sympathetic interest in the personal welfare of friends and acquaintances is familiar to us all. The last conversation it was my pleasure to have with him, but a few days before his death, was mainly concerning an

old friend of his younger days, one who was being called upon to suffer pain and vexation of spirit, and for whom he expressed the most tender solicitude and regard. These traits have endeared him to his friends and the community who to-day so sincerely mourn his loss. I count it a high privilege to have found in him for so long a time, so warm a personal friend,—one ever ready with helpful suggestions—and who, when asked for advice, has given it in the most kindly manner. Realizing it all,—the sense of my own personal loss, and the deepest, most heartfelt sympathy for his son, whose loss is heaviest of us all,—my heart is too full to say more than that I join most heartily in the words of eulogy by other members of the Council, and in the resolutions offered.

Hon. P. EMORY ALDRICH said :

This Society has lost, not only its venerated chief executive officer, but also one of its wisest councillors and largest benefactors. Association, such as we have for many years enjoyed with a person of his rare combination of virtues, makes a positive addition to the pleasures of existence; dignifies daily life; leads us to think better, though more humbly, of ourselves, and exalts our estimate of the worth of human life and character. Mr. SALISBURY exhibited in his life and conduct the great qualities of integrity, sincerity, dignity, and courtesy. There was an entireness or completeness in his character, combining absolute probity of mind with rectitude of conduct; a transparent sincerity that had nothing to conceal which others had a right to know; a dignity in thought and bearing that commanded universal respect, and a courtesy of manner, in his intercourse with all classes of his fellow-men, resulting from a proper self-respect and a due regard to the rights and feelings of others. Combined with these elements of character, was the subjective quality of benevolence, constantly manifesting itself in deeds of active beneficence. And besides



and above all these, he possessed that which, a great observer of men has said, is a necessary and indispensable element of every great human character, *Religion*. In his conversations with friends he not infrequently dwelt upon the great themes of life, death and immortality, with a calmness and wisdom rivalling the best utterances of the wisest among the ancient philosophers, but without their perplexing doubts. He never spoke of death as an evil to be dreaded, but rather as a good to be desired; as a happy transition, especially for those who have reached the extreme limit of human life, from the infirmities and narrow limitations of this stage of existence to a larger and nobler sphere of being. Nor was he one of those who undervalue this life and speak of it as not worth living. Indeed, he might very properly have adopted, as expressive of his own sentiments on the subject of life and death, the language imputed to Cato by the author of *De Senectute*; and which has recently been rendered into the purest English by a scholar for whom Mr. SALISBURY entertained profound respect: "I am not," said Cato, "indeed inclined to speak ill of life, nor am I sorry to have lived; for I have so lived that I do not think that I was born to no purpose. Yet I depart from life as from an inn, not from a home; for nature has given us a lodging for a sojourn, not for a place of habitation. . . . Old age is the closing act of life, as of a drama, and we ought in this to avoid utter weariness, especially if the act has been prolonged beyond its due length." Mr. SALISBURY'S conversations respecting men and books, public affairs, and scientific and historical questions, were always instructive and stimulating. He was an excellent judge of character, clearly discerning between the true and the false. And while far removed from all mere censoriousness in speech, he did not hesitate on all proper occasions, to condemn with just severity whatever was base in conduct or character. His great liberality to various educational institutions has been eloquently portrayed, in the generous tributes others of his late associates



have already paid to his memory. But was it not true of him, that he was the patron of learning, rather than of learned men or great and popular institutions? He always seemed, to me, disposed to devote his wealth and personal services to opening new avenues to knowledge and honorable usefulness for those who, without his aid, might never be able to attain them, rather than to connect his name as patron with some splendid achievement in science, or to found an institution that should bear his name down to future ages.

Those of us who have been associated with him as trustees of our Technical School, founded mainly for the benefit of young men who have their own fortunes to make, know how constant and efficient his labors have been in its behalf, and that without his munificent gifts, that institution could not possibly have gained the high standing it now holds among the best scientific schools of our country.

I am glad to be permitted to pay even this slight tribute to the memory of our late President, whose name and character will be long and gratefully cherished, not only by this Society, but by many others which have been enriched by his bounty and guided by his counsels.

CHARLES DEANE, LL.D., said that he was not prepared to say more than that he sympathized and agreed with all that had been said.

The resolutions were then unanimously adopted.

The chair appointed as the committee required: CHARLES DEANE, LL.D., JOSEPH SARGENT, M.D., and NATHANIEL PAINE, Esq. The Committee invited the Rev. ANDREW P. PEABODY, D.D., who was present, to prepare the commemorative address, and he accepted the duty.

The meeting was then dissolved.

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